

THEME A : LEGALITY AND LAND TENURE

This theme deals with the legality of operations and the legal existence of the Forest Management Enterprise (FME) along with the participating Forest Management Units (FMUs). Major issues proposed to be dealt with in this theme include compliance to National, State and local laws, payments of duties and levies, compliance to national and international agreements to which India is a signatory (e.g., CITES, ITTO etc.), clear and documented ownership of forest lands along with documented use rights etc. This theme also deals with responsibilities for ensuring legal compliance as well as resolution of issues related to disputes of ownership, use rights etc. This theme would also look into the nature, frequency and severity of any regulatory violations or non compliances and the manner in which they have been addressed. Another issue that may be addressed here would be the availability of resources – physical, financial and human, to ensure compliance to relevant laws and statutes.

THEME B: FOREST MANAGEMENT PLAN – CREATION, IMPLEMENTATION AND MONITORING

Forest management shall comprise the cycle of inventory and planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation, and shall include an appropriate assessment of the social, environmental and economic impacts of forest management operations. This shall form a basis for a cycle of continuous improvement to minimize or avoid negative impacts. Forest management planning must provide for the sustainable management of forests and its biodiversity, encompassing the social, economic and ecological dimensions, as enshrined in the National Forest Policy. This theme majorly deals with the development and management of the forest operations in a Forest Management Enterprise (FME) in a defined management plan. Other issues that need to be addressed within the ambit of this theme include, but not limited to, development of objectives of the management plan (silvicultural, socio-economic, environmental), periodic revisions of management plans, training of forest managers and workers in implementation of the management plans, establishment of monitoring and assessment protocols for plan implementation (including severity and frequency of monitoring), procedures for establishing Chain of Custody of forest products, public summary of results etc. The theme would also address the resources that have been allocated for plan development as well as for monitoring and evaluation as well as the extent of stakeholder input that has gone into plan development.

THEME C : IMPACTS OF MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

This theme principally deals with issues related to the effects of various management activities and their impacts on forest resources and the surrounding environment in which the Forest Management Enterprise (FME) is operating. This theme would include matters related to protection and conservation of soil and water resources which may be affected by management activities, Integrated Pest Management, control of use of chemicals and issues related to their storage and safety, exotic and/or invasive species and their control, assessment of forest resources to climate change vulnerability, adaptation and mitigation measures at the FME/FMU level etc. This theme would also look at forests and climate change, including the impacts of climate change on forests ecosystems, as well as the potential of forest management activities to fulfill climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, which can dovetail with the National Action Plan on Climate Change.

THEME D: ECOLOGICAL HEALTH AND ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY – CONSERVATION AND MANAGEMENT

This theme deals with the issues of natural resource capital accounting and management as well as conservation of natural resources of high conservation and biodiversity values. This theme would also look at ecosystem health and vitality and maintenance and conservation of diversity within the FME – diversity at genetic, species and ecosystem levels. Conservation areas not only include areas with high levels of species density or biodiversity, but also areas which serve critical ecological functions and areas serving as a cultural heritage to the local people. Conservation attributes would also need to take into account the uniqueness of the resource and its replaceability/survival for future generations. The theme would also look at the various types of forest services associated with a functioning forest, including provisioning services, regulatory services, cultural services and supporting services, many of which may not be tangible, but whose loss would affect the balance of the system. Issues related to climate change – vulnerability, mitigation and adaptation would also be dealt with in this theme.

THEME E: SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE FOREST MANAGEMENT - SOCIAL AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS AND RIGHTS

This theme would be dealing with matters pertaining to rights and issues related to local communities, forest dwellers, tribals and also forest workers. Elaborating on this theme, it would include provisioning by the FME of a safe working environment with written policies and guidelines covering all aspects of workplace health and safety. Further, training of forest workers in health and safety and use of safety equipment would be a part of this theme. Other issues would address matter of workers' rights to form unions and collectively bargain, no discrimination among workers on the basis of caste, religion, sex, age etc., no employment of children below 14 years of age etc. Further, this theme would also address the rights of local communities on the forest resource, along with compensation for use of their traditional knowledge, and/or compensation for any loss of or negative impacts on the legal right, property, resources, or livelihood of local residents. Along with permanent, temporary and contract workers, this theme would also address the rights of self employed as well as piece rated workers (who are the most predominant in the Indian context)

THEME F : SUSTAINABLE AND ECONOMIC UTILIZATION OF FOREST RESOURCES

This theme deals with the diverse and complete utilization of forest produce and the establishment and development of a robust local economy with an emphasis on use of forest products and services and along with an inventorisation of the benefits associated with forests. Other suggested issues that may be addressed in this theme include optimum utilization of forest produce with minimizing wastage, use of local resources and value addition to produce as well as local economy, Establishment of written framework with guiding rules regarding extraction of NTFPs including rules related to nature and type of extraction, intensity and frequency and subsequent fallow periods etc. Also, this theme would also look into traditional management systems and their integration into the FME management and that Forest management activities are designed and implemented, spatially and temporally, with due consideration to the impacts on the forest services. This theme would also cover emerging aspects of biodiversity offsets, payment for ecosystem services, REDD+ etc.